

Phoenix VA hospital after he became ill. The doctors diagnosed him, knew he had a history of cancer, and they very clearly designated his condition as "urgent." That would indicate Mr. Breen should get another checkup within a week of his visit to the emergency room. Yet Mr. Breen was forced to wait and wait and wait and wait—even as he and his daughter-in-law made daily phone calls to the VA asking about an appointment and emphasizing the urgency of his medical condition. Each time they were told to wait just a little longer. Finally, a full 2 months after his initial ER visit, Mr. Breen passed away. The cause of death was stage 4 bladder cancer.

A week after that the VA finally called with Mr. Breen's appointment—after he died. By then, obviously, it was too late.

Stories such as Mr. Breen's should be a wake-up call to the U.S. Senate. They should be a wake-up call to the White House. They should pierce our sense of moral indignation and say: When are we going to do something about this backlog? When are we going to hold people accountable for cooking the books so that they avoid accountability for a backlog that we all know exists?

So I am suggesting again that the President needs to designate a point person who will come in and deal with this on an emergency basis; it is that serious. The President needs to treat this seriously—not ignore it, not sweep it under the rug—and the Senate needs to treat this with the urgency it deserves as well, which is why I hope the majority leader, who is the person responsible for such things, would designate or ask the committees with jurisdiction to hold emergency hearings to get to the bottom of this because we do not know whether this just happened in Phoenix. Chances are it did not, and I will mention another outrageous example in a minute. We need to know if this is just a local matter or endemic to the whole VA disability and health care system.

In Pittsburgh, we know there have been other problems. Six patients at the VA hospital died, and more than 20 others became sick, after an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease. As in Phoenix, patients at the Pittsburgh facility were kept in the dark about what was going on. It took "CBS News" doing an investigation to bring this to the light of day.

"CBS News" concluded:

An internal memo shows a top doctor at the hospital knew that Legionella—

Which causes Legionnaires' disease—could potentially be in the hospital's water system, and [he] recommended the use of bottled water. Though staff members were told to test patients for Legionnaires' disease if they exhibited certain symptoms, there is no evidence to suggest patients or their families were informed of management's concerns about a potential outbreak.

In other words, they were kept in the dark.

It is scandals such as this and a rampant lack of accountability that have prompted people such as Senator MARCO RUBIO from Florida to introduce legislation that would give the VA Secretary more authority to fire and discipline senior officials for abuses and failures on the job. I think that is a smart move, and I am proud to cosponsor that bill. Because the lack of accountability leading to the problems I have just described is absolutely appalling. It should shock all of us.

The underlying problem, which we have known about—to which I fear Congress and the Federal Government have become desensitized—is there are literally hundreds of thousands of U.S. military veterans who are waiting to have their disability, compensation, and pension claims processed and waiting more than the 125 days the VA calls a backlog.

According to the VA's own figures, in mid-April there were 602,000 compensation and pension claims pending nationwide, and a majority of them had been pending and in the backlog category.

For that matter, there are still 51,000 entitlement claims pending at just two VA regional offices, in Houston and Waco in my State. A majority of those claims are backlogged too.

I know that Congress has taken steps to address the backlog in claims. In the national defense authorization bill from last year, we included some of the provisions which authorized State-based veterans organizations, like those in Texas, to help the Federal Veterans' Administration expedite processing of these backlogged claims. But it is not enough. The evidence from Pittsburgh and the evidence from Phoenix indicates that it is not enough. So we have to do more.

This is not partisan politics. This should not be treated as business as usual. This should be a call to action on the part of the Senate and the Federal Government to live up to its obligations and its commitment to our Nation's veterans.

Just a few concluding words and thoughts about the challenges that face our current generation of military veterans. According to a recent survey, more than half of those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq struggle with some sort of physical or mental health issues stemming from their service. Some of them are relatively minor. Some of them are very serious, indeed. The serious ones have manifested themselves in horrible ways. For example, one out of every two Afghan and Iraq war veterans says they know a fellow servicemember that has either attempted or committed suicide. As I said a moment ago, those who sign up for the U.S. military and our all-volunteer force receive a promise—a promise that if they serve their country, if they can do their part, their country, our country, will do our part.

All they are asking for is us to make good on that promise. Serving Amer-

ica's veterans is one of the most important responsibilities the Federal Government has. The VA's failure to meet its responsibility is an ongoing scandal—one that I will continue drawing attention to until our veterans get the support they so rightfully deserve.

I hope my other colleagues, who I know share this commitment to our veterans, will come to the floor and urge the majority leader to ask the committees with jurisdiction to convene emergency hearings to get to the bottom of this, to find out if what happened in Phoenix and Pittsburgh are isolated events or if this a cancer that is eating away at our VA health care and disability system.

I call upon the President once again to appoint a point person to make sure that we get to the bottom of this as soon as possible because, of course, this is an executive branch function—the veterans health care system. I remember when healthcare.gov was rolled out and the Web site did not work the way the President expected it to. He appointed a point person to help make sure that all hands were on deck and we got to the bottom of the problem as soon as possible. I would think that this scandal in the Veterans' Administration and the way our veterans are being treated would at least equal the same sense of urgency and call for the same sort of response as the failure of the Web site for healthcare.gov.

So I hope our colleagues in the Senate can pull together to come to the service of our veterans in a way that they deserve. I hope the President views this with the kind of urgency that it really deserves and appoints a point person who can get to the bottom of this, working with Congress as quickly as possible so we can meet our obligations to our Nation's veterans.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO DARYL CHAPPELLE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, before I give my intended remarks, I want to add my voice to others who have paid tribute to Daryl Chappelle, who retires today after 42 years of working in the Senate. I have only been here for 3 years, but I can tell you, in the time that I have been here, I look forward to running into Daryl as I make my trips back and forth between the Russell Senate Office Building and the Senate floor. There are certain people in life who just brighten your day. Every occasion when I have encountered Daryl during the workday, it has just been that experience.

I pay tribute to an individual about whom I don't know a lot personally or of his background or his family. It is a sad thing about the nature of today's busy world in which we don't know people—as I certainly do at home and in hometowns across our country—but I will tell you that the opportunity to be with and experience the conversation and joy that Daryl adds to this place has been a real treat and a wonderful experience for me.

I wish him and his family best wishes in his retirement and thank him for his service to the Senate and to the people of our country.

NOMINATION OF NANCY MORITZ

I rise to tell my colleagues about a nomination we are considering, and I speak in support of Justice Nancy Moritz.

She is currently a supreme court justice on the Kansas Supreme Court, and she is before us today as a nominee to sit on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

I appreciate working with my colleague Senator ROBERTS and those in the White House as we came together to try to find an acceptable and honorable nominee, and I believe we did. I extend my appreciation to Justice Moritz for having agreed to answer the call to serve her country in a new capacity as a member of the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

She comes today before the Senate and again on Monday as someone who is highly qualified, greatly prepared, and who has the necessary background. Certainly the educational requirements are there, but the experience that she has encountered in her distinguished legal career, both public and private, really adds a dimension to this person and something that I would look for in a member of the tenth circuit.

For the past 4 years she has been a justice on the Kansas Supreme Court. Prior to that she spent 15 years as an attorney in the U.S. attorney's office in our State in both Kansas City and Topeka. Prior to that she had 6 years of experience in private practice as well.

Justice Moritz was raised in a small neighboring town of mine. Her hometown is Tipton. It is in many ways a typical small Kansas town. I know folks in Tipton would tell me how exceptional they are—and I have seen many instances of how true that is—but I know the people of Tipton. I have witnessed their character, their integrity, their work ethic, their kindness, their care and genuine concern for others. That sense of community you attain when you grow up in a town of just a few hundred people is something I think has great benefit in becoming who we are.

I, in some ways, admire the justice for that background and know what that kind of experience means in molding her character as well as her work ethic and how she conducts herself.

She also served for a period of time as a law clerk to Judge Ed Larson. Ed

Larson was a law partner of mine, and he remains a good friend. I called to visit with him about the nomination of Justice Moritz, and I trust his judgment. He not only was a law partner in practice with me—or really I was in practice with him—but he then went to the court of appeals and then was elevated to the Kansas Supreme Court.

Of all the people I have met in life, and certainly many of the attorneys I have met in life and the judges, if you were looking for someone whose opinion and judgment you would trust, Judge Ed Larson is certainly that person. He has made clear to me that Justice Moritz was one of the very best law clerks he ever had, and he believes her to be highly qualified. With his recommendation, my judgment about Justice Moritz was even more increased and enhanced.

Again, I am convinced that her background, growing up the way she did, her experience with Judge Larson and his stamp of approval upon her character and abilities, suggests we have a great person to join the tenth circuit.

I encourage my colleagues to review her qualifications, and I would hope and assume they would reach the same conclusion that I have, that the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals will be well served with this Kansan on it. I look forward to supporting her confirmation, and I ask my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATIONS OF GEORGE HAZEL AND THEODORE CHUANG

Mr. CARDIN. I rise in support of the nominations of George Hazel and Theodore Chuang to be U.S. district judges for the District of Maryland.

Let me say from the beginning that I am very proud of the manner in which Senator MIKULSKI, the senior Senator from Maryland, and I have established a process to review and make recommendations to the President for the vacancies in the U.S. District of Maryland.

We have used a process that we think works. It gets us the most qualified individuals, and these two today are certainly an example of highly qualified individuals who want to be judges for the right reasons. They have a demonstrated track record of public service.

I particularly appreciate their commitment to pro bono. They understand that the courts need to be open to all and that we have a special responsibility as lawyers and as judges to make sure that there is equal access to justice. They understand the appropriate role of a judge in our system to be objective and to carry out the laws of this land.

George Jarrod Hazel received his B.A. cum laude in 1996 from Morehouse College and his J.D. in 1999 from Georgetown University Law Center. He was

nominated to fill the vacancy created by the taking of senior status in May of 2013 by Judge Alexander Williams, Jr.

I might just say Judge Williams had a very distinguished record on the district court.

Mr. Hazel began his legal career in private practice from 1999 to 2004. He then became a government prosecutor as an assistant U.S. attorney in the District of Columbia from 2005 to 2008.

He then joined the Greenbelt, MD, U.S. attorney's office for the District of Maryland. Finally, Mr. Hazel joined the office of the State's attorney for Baltimore City and now serves as the chief deputy State's attorney.

I can attest that being the chief deputy State's attorney in Baltimore City is a demanding position. In his present job, Mr. Hazel helps to oversee 200 prosecutors and 200 support staffers, and he has fought tirelessly to keep our communities safe and make them safer. In fact, he has played a key role in achieving those objectives.

He has demonstrated in his entire career as a lawyer a commitment to public service in each of the positions that he has held. He wants to serve the public, and these are the types of people I would hope we would like to see in our district court.

Mr. Hazel has extensive Federal and State court litigation experience, including civil and criminal matters, as well as jury trials. He has served as a prosecutor, private attorney, and manager of a large legal office.

Mr. Hazel lives in North Potomac with his wife and two children. He is an active member of his community. He is a leader in the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Largo, MD, and in Washington, DC, and has served as a member, trustee, and now as a deacon.

In terms of his pro bono commitment, Mr. Hazel has been president of his church's legal ministry, where he has assisted members of the church, including many who could not afford lawyers, in obtaining legal representation when they are in need.

He also prepares meals at the church and teaches Sunday school classes.

Mr. Chuang was nominated to fill the vacancy created by Judge Roger Titus when he took senior status in January of this year.

Judge Titus had a very distinguished record and continues to have a very distinguished record in our district court.

Mr. Chuang received his J.D. magna cum laude in 1994 from Harvard Law School and his B.A. summa cum laude in 1991 from Harvard University. He began his legal career as a law clerk for Judge Dorothy W. Nelson in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 1994 to 1995. From 1995 to 1998, Mr. Chuang served as a trial attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. From 1998 to 2004, Mr. Chuang served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the District of Massachusetts. He spent 3 years in private practice from 2004 to 2007.